

A Lost WWII Hero Remembered in Slick Thriller ‘The Imitation Game’

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on December 13, 2014 - 2:35pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – The heroism of World War II codebreaker Alan Turing has been lost in time. Partly due to the secrecy of his mission within the British military in World War II, but also because of the intolerance that erased him soon after his incredible accomplishments. The story of Turing, a man who helped the Allies win the war but was then persecuted for his closeted homosexuality, is given a long-overdue major feature treatment.

“The Imitation Game” follows the extremely-focused math genius as he is brought on board by the British military in 1940 to break the German’s infamous Enigma code. The stakes created by Enigma were impossible, in that a code had to be cracked in less than a day before it would completely change, and everything had to start all over. Turing is assisted by a team of other mathematicians (played by Allen Leech, Matthew Goode, Matthew Beard). While the team keeps hitting snags, Turing also seeks to find new talent, and brings onboard a woman named Joan Clarke (Keira Knightley).

When the team makes a breakthrough on Enigma, the drama of their time working secretly during World War II only begins. They are faced with the conflict of what to do with an abundance of new information that could save a lot of lives, but also blow the British’s secret about their current status on Enigma. Meanwhile, Alan hopes to keep his sexual orientation secret, which is considered a crime basically as worse as being a spy.

In one of the year’s best performances, Cumberbatch introduces Turing to the world, and proves his cinematic guff with an inhabited performance that he rides to the very tragic end of Turing’s tale. Cumberbatch stages the lost historical figure as a mind that is constantly at work, his precise facial mannerisms and stumbling dialogue creating an instant impression of how brilliant a human being could be. Cumberbatch treats his crucial role with equal sharpness and sensitivity, imbuing charisma on an inward character, and fashioning Turing as a magnetic underdog against flatly opposing bosses and confrontational teammates.



The Imitation Game

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

Sharing the film’s taut “mission control” scenes are his handful of fellow brainiacs who mostly serve to ask each other expositional questions. Playing this group’s other outsider, Knightley is included in the film to even lesser effect than her instrumental supporting co-stars. Her inclusion feigns politics more than it strives for productivity, with “The Imitation Game” specifically paralleling her renegade presence with a shoed-in significance; the constrained script opts to make her a love interest most of all, another person affected by the pressures that contort Turing.

Nonetheless, when the gang’s all together and the stakes of a war lay on their calculations, they are on-target in expressing the traumatic moral complexity of code breakers managing a war. However passably memorable the supporting actors may be in the group, their collective impression is visceral. The script aims to squeeze some tears out of these moment, but that tact proves overdone; it’s the humbling awe of godlike powers that settles best in these chapters.

This is one of the first major productions to talk about Turing, and the movie does a fine job in justifying its introduction. An efficient, non-stuffy thriller, “The Imitation Game” is a swift mathematician tale that is cut to consistently provide information. Working with its inherent structure that is filled with twists and a tragic ending, the no-frills take on war is constantly shifting between its two themes of underdogs and outsiders. Even when its dialogue proves hokey, or its framing device of Turing as mathematician stale, the film has an electricity that helps the movie get its message across.



The Imitation Game

Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

Adapting writer Graham Moore concentrates the juicy story of Turing vs. Enigma to its personal struggles, where Turing's efforts are made to be inherently personal tales, despite truths of international collaboration found in the most casual of history book glances. With its dramatic foundation created by truth, Moore's script takes a direct approach to service capital themes, making Turing's travails relevant if not too direct; the mystery that "The Imitation Game" teases involves sudden twists, with characters lacking intricacies.

That being said, the more puzzling aspect about "The Imitation Game" concerns its presentation of Turing, whose overdue cinematic treatment is an example of progress' lethargic pace. Similarly, this movie's cinematic canonization for Turing echoes this notion, in that some revered historical figures seem to need time in the public eye before they can be complicated, or imbued with qualities that make them more flesh-and-blood than desecrated statues. Stephen Hawking is well-known enough that he is freely presented as a jerk in "The Theory of Everything"; however, the introduction of Turing in "The Imitation Game" presents him with a perfection that posits his society's BS pressures as the cause of any flaws, and that Turing was likely never wrong about his calculations. In the process, a fascinating character is framed as under-appreciated super machine from the beginning, and is stripped of offering an appropriate challenge as a humanly imperfect being. "The Imitation Game's" introduction to Turing leads to a slightly de-humanizing conceit, despite the twisting memorial's understanding that viewers like toying with their riddles, even more than downloading lost secrets.

"The Imitation Game" opened in Chicago on December 12th. Featuring Benedict Cumberbatch, Keira Knightley, Matthew Goode, Allen Leech, Matthew Beard, and Mark Strong. Written by Graham Moore. Directed by Morten Tyldum. Rated "PG-13"



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